United Nations

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1250
19 October 1992

MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Security Council welcomes announcement by Special Representative for Angola that elections in that country were "generally free and fair"; is awaiting recommendations of Secretary-General on contribution of United Nations to completing Presidential elections; both sides meet today in Luanda to discuss modalities for second round of elections.

+ Agreement reached in principle on renewal of Memorandum of Understanding for United Nations humanitarian programme in Iraq; Iraq-Kuwait Boundary Demarcation Commission to begin emplacement of first boundary pillar in south end of Wadi Al Batin early this week.

+ Contact Group of Organization of Islamic States calls for Security Council meeting to consider lifting of arms embargo on Bosnia and Herzegovina and steps to enforce "no-fly zone".

+ Azerbaijan protests request by Armenia for designation of Special Representative and deployment of United Nations observers to that region, saying request will delay attainment of peace.

+ President of CARE, USA, appointed operational manager of United Nations 100-Day Action Programme for accelerated humanitarian assistance for Somalia; cross-border operation begins repatriation of Somali refugees from Kenya.

+ Bosnia and Herzegovina contends troops of former Yugoslav People's Army, which were to have withdrawn from Dubrovnik region and Prevlaka Peninsula under supervision of UNPROFOR, are now entering its territory north and north-west of Dubrovnik.

+ Federal Republic of Yugoslavia asks Secretary-General to prevent possible decision to forbid that country's participation in work of Economic and Social Council.

+ Croatia and Yugoslavia agree to exchange lists of prisoners, provide information on people missing during conflict and facilitate return of displaced people.

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For information media—not an official record

+ General Assembly decides that 1999 will be International Year of Older Persons, as it concludes international conference marking tenth anniversary of adoption of International Plan of Action on Ageing.

+ Third Committee hears statement by Director-General of United Nations Office at Vienna as it begins debate on social development issues.

+ Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights tells Committee of his concern that violations continue to escalate despite measures.

+ World Food Day -- dedicated as reminder of basic right to safe, healthy food -- observed in more that 140 nations around world.

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The Security Council this evening issued a statement welcoming the announcement on 17 October by Margaret Anstee, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Angola, that the recent elections in that country can be considered to have been generally free and fair.

The statement was issued following a briefing this evening of the Council by the Ad Hoc Commission which visited Angola from 11 to 14 October to support the implementation of the Peace Agreement. The Council expressed gratitude to the four-member Commission and welcomed its contribution to reducing the tension in Angola and to finding a solution to the difficulties that arose after the elections of 29 and 30 September.

The statement once again called upon the parties to abide scrupulously by the commitments entered into within the framework of the Peace Agreements, in particular with regard to the demobilization of their troops and formation of the Unified Armed forces, and to refrain from any action that could increase the tension.

The Council said it looked forward to the recommendations of the Secretary-General on the contribution of the United Nations to ensure the smooth completion of the Presidential elections and said it would act without delay on the basis of those recommendations.

According to a United Nations official, both sides in Angola met today in Luanda to discuss and agree to modalities for a second round of elections in that country, as runoff must occur 30 days after announcement of election results. The results were officially announced on Saturday, 17 October, with President Dos Santos in receipt of 49.57 per cent of the votes and the leader of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), Jonas Savimbi, of 40.07 per cent.

In her statement on Saturday, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Angola, Margaret Anstee, declaring the elections held on 29 and 30 September "free and fair", urged all Angolans and all Angolan political

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leaders, as well as the international community, to respect and support the results of this stage of the electoral process. A further certification would be made after the second round of the Presidential election, she said.

The National Electoral Council had established four commissions to investigate the complaints and allegations on the spot, as a result of complaints by UNITA and other organizations that there had been widespread, massive and systematic irregularities and fraud during the entire electoral process. Ms. Anstee said that in the light of the above mentioned facts and observations, and after considering very carefully the concerns and views expressed by all the Angolan parties, as well as by other international observers, the United Nations considered that "while there were certainly some irregularities in the electoral process, these appear to have been mainly due to human error and inexperience".

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An agreement has been reached in principle on the renewal of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the United Nations humanitarian programme in Iraq for six months, a United Nations official said today.

The negotiations, which took place on 16 and 17 October in Baghdad between the United Nations and Iraqi authorities, included talks on the winter programme for northern Iraq. The United Nations was represented by James Grant, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and Qazi Shaukat Fareed, Director in the Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs.

The official said details of the agreement were being submitted today to the Secretary-General for his consideration.

In a related development, the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Boundary Demarcation Commission, which just ended its seventh session in New York, will hold its next session in early December at which time it will continue its consideration of the Khowr Abd Allah section of the boundary. At its latest session from 12 to 16 October, the Commission authorized experts to gather further information for its decision on that section of the boundary. It also heard a report on the manufacturing of the boundary pillars, the installation of its survey team and the arrangements made to finalize the construction and emplacement of boundary pillars and markers. The Commission expects to begin emplacement of the first pillar in the south end of the Wadi Al Batin early this week.

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The Contact Group of the Organization of Islamic States has called for an immediate meeting of the Security Council "to consider and secure" the lifting of arms embargo on Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to consider steps to secure the effective enforcement of resolution 781 (1992) which established a "no-fly zone" over that country.

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In a letter to the President of the Security Council, the Permanent Representatives of Egypt, Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Senegal and Turkey quote the view put to them by the Foreign Minister of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Haris Slajdzic. Because of the great disparity between the armaments available to the Serbian side and the Government forces, he had said, the situation on the ground was becoming increasingly difficult. They write that "if the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina had more adequate means to repel aggression, the likelihood of achieving a peaceful and just solution through negotiations would be greatly enhanced."

They also cite violation by the Serbian side of the of the Council's "no-fly zone" resolution as necessitating consideration of steps needed to secure its enforcement.

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The Government of Azerbaijan has protested the request by Armenia last week for the designation of a Special Representative and the deployment of United Nations observers to that region, saying it was "an attempt to shift" the negotiating process into a new framework which could "only delay ... the attainment of peace in the region".

In a letter to the President of the Security Council, dated 15 October, the Azerbaijani Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Hassan Hassanov, said the Protocol signed on 25 September in Moscow concerning the arrangements for the cease-fire and the deployment of the observers from Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan to the conflict zone were already being carried out. The Armenian request, he said, has "disregarded" those documents and has made a proposal for a "parallel arrangement for settlement of the conflict". He warned that the Armenian approach would lead to an extension of the negotiating process and would further conplicate the already complex situation in the region.
Document S/24671

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The United Nations today announced the appointment of Dr. Philip Johnston, President and Chief Executive Officer of CARE, USA, to serve as operational manager of its 100-Day Programme for accelerated humanitarian assistance for Somalia, until the end of 1992.

According to a United Nations official, the appointment of Dr. Johnston, whose services were offered to the Organization by CARE, "the world's largest relief organization", was intended to bring about "optimal coherence between the programmes and activities of the non-governmental organizations, United Nations agencies and other institutions concerned, and to strengthen the United Nations support of the many humanitarian aid organizations in Somalia".

In a separate development, in a press release today, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) announced that a UNHCR convoy carrying more than 700 returnees, together with food and water, arrived Friday, 16

October, in the Somali city of Tulo Barwago from Mandera, Kenya. It was part of a cross-border operation aimed at reducing refugee flows and helping people to return home.

Some 300,000 Somali refugees had crossed into Kenya in the past 18 months and hundreds of the estimated 50,000 refugees in Mandera, many from Tulo Barwago, had asked UNHCR to help them return home. The previous week, UNHCR had sent a team to Tulo Barwago, together with Somali elders, to assess conditions for such a return and to pre-position food and water. On Friday, three trucks set out from Mandera on the 60 km journey to Tulo Barwago, with 738 refugees, water and 14 metric tons of wheat flour.

The agency has identified another 10 to 15 towns and villages to which refugees could return if security conditions permit. Working with UNHCR in assessing the returnees needs and providing the cross-border assistance are Torcaire, an Irish non-governmental organization, and the International Rescue Committee.

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The acting President of Bosnia and Herzegovina has issued a protest saying that the troops of the former Yugoslav People's Army, which were to have withdrawn from the Dubrovnik region and the Prevlaka Peninsula under supervision of forces from United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), were now entering its territory north and north-west of Dubrovnik. The Yugoslav People's Army had disregarded the agreements at the Geneva session of the London Conference by which the UNPROFOR observers were to monitor the withdrawal.

In a letter to the President of the Security Council, dated 15 October, the Acting President of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ejup Ganic, further protested the intensified use by the aggressor of helicopters for the transfer of troops and ammunition, recalling Council resolution 781 (1992) which prohibits all military flights over the Bosnian territory, including the use of helicopters.

The aggressor has so far broken all of the promises made to the London Conference six weeks ago, Mr. Ganic said. He called on the international community to "finally act decisively in the former Yugoslavia, and refuse to allow itself to be used as a devious tool of aggression and "ethnic cleansing". Document S/24675

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The Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has asked the Secretary-General "to do everything in his power" to prevent the possible decision to forbid that country's participation in the work of the Economic and Social Council, saying such a decision would have a negative impact on economic activities in its country.

In a letter to the Secretary-General, dated 15 October, Milan Pa[illegible], the Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, said his countr[illegible]had

expressed its surprise at and disagreement with what it terms the "ever more frequent instances" in which it was being denied the right to participate in the organs of the United Nations other than Assembly bodies after the decision by the General Assembly that the country not participate in its work.

In a related development, the Croatian Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Mario Nobilo, said in a letter to the Secretary-General, dated 14 October, that "there is no doubt" that the decision of the General Assembly "also applies to the work in all of the Committees of the General Assembly". He added that the circulation of a document by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was "a clear act of active participation" and therefore a breach of the provisions of the Assembly's resolution.
Document A/C.1/47/6 and A/47/532

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Delegations from the Republic of Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, meeting in Geneva yesterday, agreed to exchange lists of names of the prisoners they are still holding, in order to pave the way for their release. According to a press release issued by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) today, they also agreed to provide each other with all the information they have concerning people reported missing during the conflict, and to facilitate the return home of displaced persons and refugees.

The ICRC, at whose headquarters the meeting was held, called on the parties to proclaim an amnesty for all offences, other than war crimes, committed during the conflict. That would include desertion and the refusal to bear weapons. The ICRC praised the fact that Croatia had decreed such an amnesty and said it expected Yugoslavia to pass similar legislation, in accordance with an agreement between the parties concluded in Budapest on 7 August.

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The General Assembly has decided that 1999 will be the International Year of Older Persons. The decision, part of the Proclamation on Ageing, was adopted without a vote on Friday as the Assembly concluded an international conference that marked the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the International Plan of Action on Ageing.

The Proclamation also urged support for national initiatives on ageing, in the context of national cultures and conditions, so that national policies for the elderly could be seen as part of States' overall development strategies. Targets on ageing for the year 2001 were examined and several speakers stressed the responsibility of society as a whole in ensuring the active participation of the aged, to prevent their marginalization.

Speakers criticized contemporary society's focus on youth, arguing that the experience and wisdom of the elderly were valuable national assets. They

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also warned that with improved longevity and lowering birth rates, care for the aged was going to become an increasingly onerous burden on succeeding generations.

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Social progress entailed the creation of societies that "put a safety net under and an opportunity ladder within reach of everyone", said Giorgio Giacomelli, the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna today, as the Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee) began its discussion of social development issues.

Mr. Giacomelli said that until recently, the focus in the United Nations had been on economic issues and progress in social concerns had been seen as a by-product of economic progress. However, he said, this traditional notion seemed to have been partially overridden, due to the "internationalization" of such issue as transborder crime, drug trafficking and the movement of displaced persons and refugees.

The Third Committee was therefore expected to discuss concerns of the elderly, disabled persons, youth and the family, in addition to the matters pertaining to the role of cooperative to combat crime.

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The Human Rights Committee, which is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, began its forty-sixth session at Geneva today by adopting its agenda and programme of work for the first week of its three-week session.

Addressing the 18-member Committee, the Under-Secretary General for Human Rights, Antoine Blanca, voiced the Secretary-General's concern that despite the adoption of measures to combat human rights violations, they were continuing to escalate at an alarming rate. The Secretary-General had proposed, among other things, that those abuses be brought to the attention of the Security Council in order to curb the trend. Mr.Blanca then gave an account of the issues that marked the various human rights-related meetings which had taken place since the Committee on human rights last met.

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More than 140 nations around the globe marked on Friday, 16 October, the annual World Food Day dedicated to the theme of "Food and Nutrition" and as a reminder of the basic right of all people to safe and healthy food.

Speaking at a special observance at FAO headquarters in Rome, the Prime Minister Khaleda Zia of Bangladesh said "no country, no Government, can accept life sentences in the form of hunger and malnutrition for its people". She urged "national and international solidarity to banish hunger and poverty" and

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called for a grand alliance of peoples, Governments and international organizations to make the "nightmare" of human deprivation and degradation a thing of the past.

In his statement, the FAO Director-General said that nutrition is "fundamental" and essential for a healthy, thriving human being and recalled that "raising levels of nutrition" is the first of the major functions that FAO is assigned by its constitution.

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